
GCSE FRENCH

Insight report:
2019 results at a glance

September 2019



2019

aqa.org.uk



insights

How to use this report

This report provides a snapshot of this summer's results. It contains information on grade boundaries and performance by paper. This report is part of our full results insight series. For extra information on results:

- Access our free Enhanced Results Analysis tool. We've created [two-minute tutorials](#) to show you how.
- Navigate to [e-AQA](#) to download the full report on the exam for a detailed breakdown.
- [Book on](#) to one of our Live lessons webinars. The Head of Curriculum for your subject will take you through this year's results and answer your questions.
- [Book on](#) to a Feedback event. See examples from real scripts from the summer to highlight common areas where students did well and where there's room for improvement.

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Qualification summary

Foundation tier

Paper 1

The 2019 paper proved to be more accessible than the 2018 paper with students handling the range of task types appropriately. There appeared to be fewer blank answers this year and fewer examples of students answering Section B in English rather than in French. It was clear that gaps in vocabulary proved to be a factor in some questions and in particular, vocabulary items which students would be expected to be familiar with from KS3.

Paper 2

The tests were administered well again this year and the quality of recordings has improved. In the role play, question words were again problematic and students should be reminded to read carefully the introductory rubric which explains the context of the task. In the photo card, students who had made good use of their preparation time by preparing at least three sentences in response to each of the three questions performed well. Teacher-examiners are advised to read carefully the guidance on paraphrasing questions in the photo card task to ensure that the meaning of the original question is maintained. In the general conversation, question technique is a key area for further improvement. Teacher-examiners should tailor their questions to the interests and ability level of the student they are testing and use follow up questions to demonstrate students' spontaneity.

Paper 3

The vast majority of students found the paper to be accessible. Many were able to gain at least some marks for each question. This year there were very few unattempted questions, although students' handwriting was not always clear. The translation discriminated well and approximately 70% of students scored at least five marks and above in this task.

Paper 4

It was encouraging to see an improvement in the overall performance of students this year. The variety of questions on the paper provided an opportunity for all students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge. Inaccurate verb formations continue to be a barrier to communication as well as a lack of knowledge of key vocabulary. Students demonstrated their ability to refer to different time frames and express opinions as required by the task. The translation task discriminated well with all students able to score some marks. The importance of learning and practising high frequency vocabulary items is key to success, as well as ensuring that all parts of the sentences have been translated carefully.

Higher tier

Paper 1

The 2019 paper proved to be more accessible than the 2018 paper with students handling the range of task types appropriately. Questions requiring a written answer discriminated well as expected and there were very few examples of unattempted questions. Students should be reminded that questions aimed at the higher grades require precision and clarity and there will be questions that require students to draw a conclusion based on what they have heard. Some key vocabulary items were not well-known.

Paper 2

The tests were administered well again this year and the quality of recordings has improved. As at Foundation tier, question words in the role-play were again problematic and students should be reminded to read carefully the introductory rubric which explains the context of the task. In the photo card, students who had made good use of their preparation time by preparing at least three sentences in response to each of the three questions performed well. Teacher-examiners are advised to read carefully the guidance on paraphrasing questions in the photo card task to ensure that the meaning of the original question is maintained. In the general conversation, question technique is a key area for further improvement. Teacher-examiners should tailor their questions to the interests and ability level of the student they are testing and use follow up questions to demonstrate students' spontaneity.

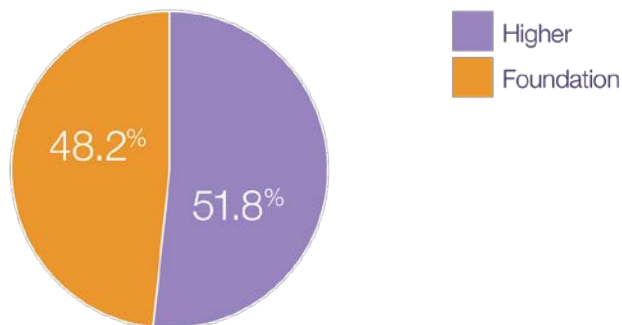
Paper 3

The majority of students found the paper to be accessible and the rubrics were followed in an exemplary fashion. Many were able to gain at least some marks for each question. This year, there were very few unattempted questions. The translation this year proved to be more accessible than in 2018 and still discriminated well. Approximately 70% of students scored at least 4 marks and above in this task, which was pleasing. Students should be reminded of the need for precision in this task. Tenses and pronouns should be translated accurately and care taken not to miss out key words, such as *plus*.

Paper 4

It was encouraging to see an improvement in the overall performance of students this year. The variety of questions on the paper provided an opportunity for all students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge. Inaccurate verb formations continue to be a barrier to communication, as well as a lack of knowledge of key vocabulary. Students demonstrated their ability to refer to different time frames and express opinions, as required by the task. Some students wrote far more than the suggested word count and although everything a student writes is marked, this did create more scope for error in some cases. The translation task discriminated well with all students able to score some marks. The importance of learning and practising high frequency vocabulary items, eg connectives and prepositions is key to success as well as ensuring that all parts of the text have been translated carefully, particularly the little words.

Entry volumes, Foundation vs Higher tier
94,651 entries



Entry volumes,
Foundation vs Higher
tier

This graphic shows
how entries were split
between the two tiers

See also: our [guidance
on choosing tiers](#)

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Conduct your own analysis using data relevant to you. Watch short [tutorials](#) on using Enhanced Results Analysis (ERA) for school, subject, group or student performance; or log straight in through aqa.org.uk/log-in

Grade boundaries

Subject or paper	Max mark	Summer 2019 grade boundaries								
		9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
French 8658F (Foundation)	240	-	-	-	-	169	152	111	71	31

Subject or paper	Max mark	Summer 2019 grade boundaries								
		9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
French 8658H (Higher)	240	203	181	159	141	123	106	97	-	-

How to interpret grade boundaries

In this linear specification, students must be entered for Foundation or Higher tier across all four skills. Their final grade is based on the total scaled marks achieved across the four components.

Grade boundaries are set using a mix of statistics and expert judgement

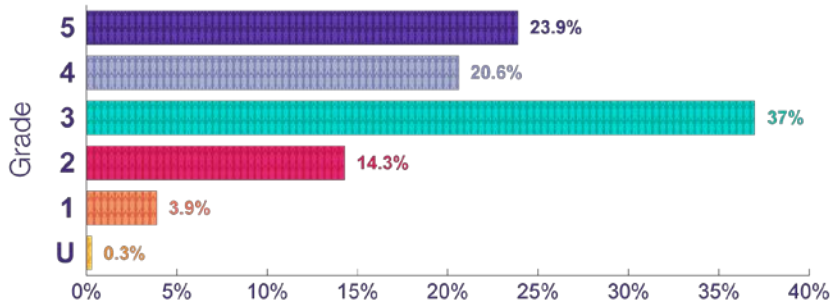
Our research team uses a range of statistics to make predictions that suggest the most appropriate grade boundaries. The statistical evidence considers the prior attainment of the given cohort as well as the distribution of marks. Senior examiners then review a script sample to confirm the statistically recommended marks are sensible for the grade.

Boundary setting is overseen by Ofqual. To find more grade boundaries and learn how they are set, visit aqa.org.uk/exams-administration/results-days/grade-boundaries-and-ums

Watch our two-minute team stories to find out more about how we set grade boundaries and ensure fairness. Visit aqa.org.uk/team-stories

Grade summary: Foundation

This shows the percentage of students achieving each grade.



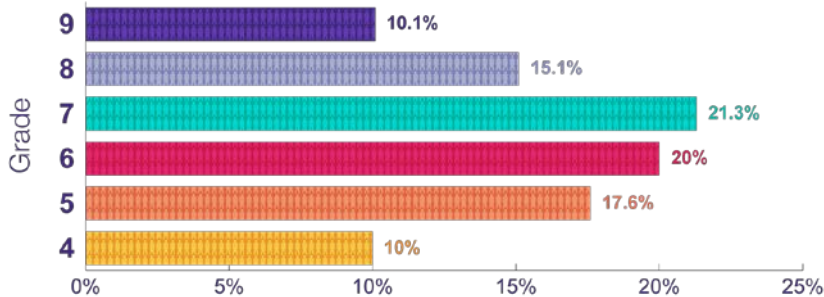
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Grade summary

This shows the percentage of students achieving each grade. Each colour represents a grade.

Grade summary: Higher

This shows the percentage of students achieving each grade.



Total achieving (3-U = 5.9%).

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Grade summary

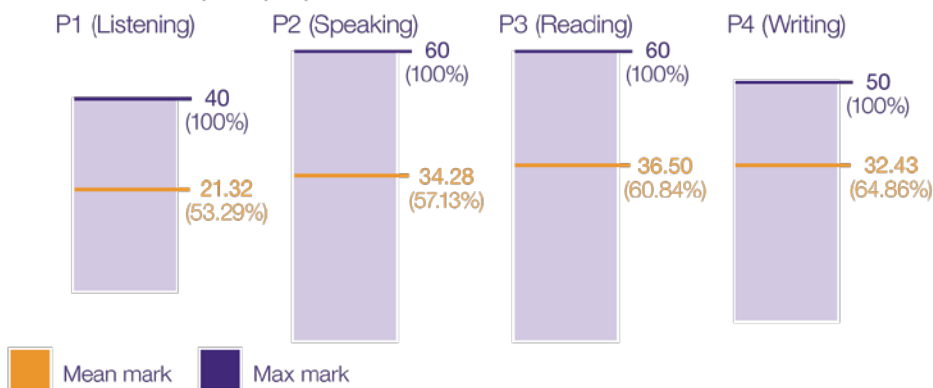
This shows the percentage of students achieving each grade. Each colour represents a grade.

Foundation tier insights

This is a snapshot. Learn more about every question from the summer 2019 series in our reports on the exam. Visit [e-AQA log in](#) and follow:

e-AQA > Secure Key Materials > GCSE > Languages > French (new specification) > Reports on the exam

Mean mark per paper: Foundation



Mean mark per paper, Foundation tier

AQA GCSE French

Paper 1

Areas where students did best	Areas where students could improve
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Questions 1-4 were completed well with only <i>boulangerie</i> proving to be not well-known.• Questions 11-15 (which were overlap questions) were done well and students had obviously been very well prepared for this type of question.• Question 24 was the final question in Section A and this was successfully answered, with over 80% of students scoring the mark. The topic of Future Plans is one that students handle well.• Questions 25-28 proved to be a pleasing start to Section B. Question 26 in particular was done very well with over two thirds of students scoring the mark.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Questions 5-9 showed a variable performance with 6 and 8 being most successfully answered. However, in Question 7, the verb <i>fumer</i> was surprisingly not known, with students getting confused with the English word 'fume' leading to answers relating to anger.• Questions 16-18 proved challenging, stemming mainly from a lack of precision in students' answers. Students were required to provide only one advantage and one disadvantage and some answers offered alternatives which could not be credited.• Questions 22-23: 22.2 and 23.2 were problematic for many students and were the least well answered in the whole paper due to misinterpretation of <i>toute sorte de légumes</i> and the lexical item <i>assiette</i> not being well known. In 22.3, very few students understood the phrase <i>fermer les fenêtres</i>.

Paper 2

Areas where students did best	Areas where students could improve
<p>Role Play</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most tests were well conducted and examiners heard some very good use of French. • Role Play 2 Task c: reference to colour was well done. • Role Play 3 Tasks a and c: these were executed well for the most part. • Role Play 5 Task e: students tend to hold strong views on uniform and this was well answered. <p>Photo card</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some teacher-examiners very successfully paraphrased questions in such a way as to maintain the meaning of the original and to avoid giving additional assistance to the student. • A small number of teachers had successfully trained their students to use appropriately the construction <i>être en train de</i> which proved very effective. <p>General Conversation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is beneficial to all students if questions are tailored to their interests and to their ability. A standard set of questions is unlikely to elicit the best performance from students from across the ability range. • Closed questions are best used to re-focus a student who is struggling, before reverting to open questions where students can convey information and where possible, develop their ideas. • To give students the chance to show an ability to respond spontaneously, teacher-examiners need to interject with follow-up 	<p>Role Play</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The biggest problem for students was dealing with interrogatives. Where their knowledge of question words was weak, they sometimes responded inappropriately to the unprepared task and struggled to formulate a question themselves. • Role Play 2 Task c: students often struggled with <i>taille</i>. • Role Play 5 Task a: <i>journée</i> was sometimes taken for journey. • Role Play 6 Task b: <i>gagnes</i> was not always understood. <p>Photo card</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some students made reference to items or to, for example, colours which could not be substantiated from the photo. • Students commonly tried to express their ideas in a continuous present tense reflecting English usage eg <i>Ils sont mangeant</i> or <i>Ils sont manger</i>. <p>General Conversation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where students were allowed to deliver long monologues, spontaneity could not be credited. • Pronunciation was frequently undermined where students attempted to present language with which they were unfamiliar. • In some cases, teacher-examiners tried to cover every topic in the theme and this led to a disjointed exchange that lacked any flow, rather than to a conversation. • In some cases, the student's question was asked after the maximum time had elapsed and could not be credited. Asking a

questions, eg seeking details, clarification, opinions and some tests showed good evidence of this, without the questions being off-putting for the student.

- High marks for range and accuracy of language were achieved by students who demonstrated the ability to incorporate more complex structures and a wider range of appropriate vocabulary.
- The quality of pronunciation varied greatly.

question during discussion of the nominated theme is a way of avoiding this.

Paper 3

Areas where students did best	Areas where students could improve
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Question 1 provided a successful start to the paper with over 90% scoring a mark for each part question.• Question 7 was very well answered by almost all students. 7.1 proved to be the most accessible part with 95% of students scoring the mark.• Question 10 proved accessible with over 80% gaining at least 2 marks out of the 4 available.• Question 13 discriminated very well with the whole range of marks evident. Very few students failed to score at all and most translated at least part of the first sentence successfully. A very pleasing number of approximately 70% of students scored at least 5 and above out of 9.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Question 2: the first three parts were done reasonably well but in 2.4, <i>medicaments</i> caused confusion and was often answered as 'doctors'.• Question 5 was based on a literary text. Parts 5.2, 5.5 and 5.6 were done well but 5.1, 5.3 and 5.4 caused difficulties. In 5.3, there were very few correct answers because of the use of the word <i>gare</i>, leading many to think they had travelled by train.• Question 8 proved to be a good discriminator but in 8.2, some students failed to explain the importance of maths and did not score for the advantage.• Question 13: students should be reminded that precision is required here and paraphrasing is to be avoided. The final section was the least well done as, in many cases, the past tense was not identified and a large number did not understand <i>vendredi</i>, giving Saturday, Sunday or even Wednesday as answers.

Paper 4

Areas where students did best	Areas where students could improve
<p>This year's paper provided an opportunity for all students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.</p> <p>Question 1</p> <p>The best responses included use of simple phrases such as <i>il y a</i> or <i>je vois, on voit, on peut voir</i>.</p> <p>Question 2</p> <p>Nearly all students were able to offer some information on each of the bullet points but some omitted bullet 1, possibly not understanding <i>petit déjeuner</i>.</p> <p>Bullet 2 elicited some good responses, as did bullets 3 and 4, with some students making good use of the stimulus, eg <i>les cigarettes, le fast-food</i>.</p> <p>Question 3</p> <p>The translation differentiated well with all students able to score some marks. The final sentence was the most successfully translated, although some students struggled with the formation of the perfect tense.</p> <p>Question 4</p> <p>Question 4.1 was the more popular choice, as it is a topic with which students are very familiar. The bullet points were well understood and students were able to respond successfully.</p> <p>Question 4.2, although a less popular choice for students, was a familiar topic and bullets were rarely omitted, leading to some very impressive</p>	<p>A lack of knowledge of key vocabulary and an inability to identify targeted rubrics and bullet points proved a barrier for some students, particularly in the longer tasks.</p> <p>Question 1</p> <p>The advice to keep to four simple sentences was often not followed with students attempting longer complex sentences which introduced ambiguity, reducing the mark to one out of two.</p> <p>Question 2</p> <p>Some answers were far longer than the suggested number of words which sometimes created lapses and influenced marks. Some students failed to offer an opinion in bullet 2 and were not credited with the task.</p> <p>Question 3</p> <p>Some gaps in vocabulary prevented the message being conveyed. <i>Il pleut</i> and <i>mars</i> were not well known. <i>Beaucoup</i> was sometimes translated as <i>trop</i> which was not accepted.</p> <p>Question 4</p> <p>In Question 4.1, some students did not recognise the time marker <i>hier</i> and therefore did not refer to past activities which impacted on their marks. It was also important for students to ensure that their responses in relation to bullets 3 and 4 made reference to school.</p> <p>In Question 4.2, bullet 4 required a reference to music festivals and some students made more general comments about music which, on their own, did not meet the requirements of the task.</p>

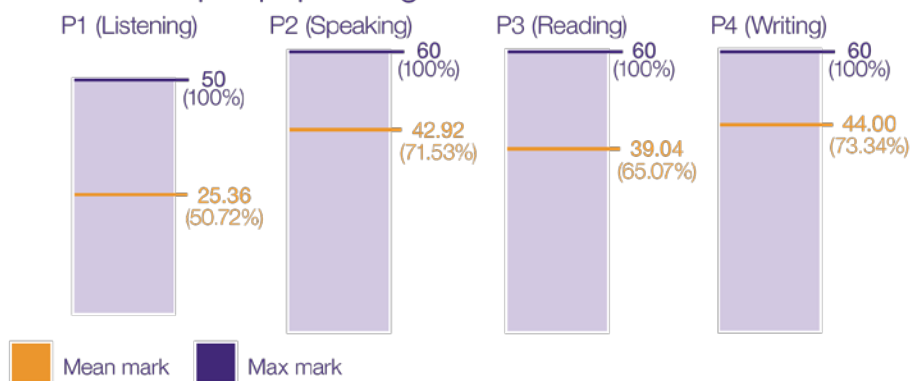
<p>responses.</p> <p>Students attempted to use a variety of language, eg different adjectives and synonyms particularly around expressing opinions. Attempts at complexity included different persons of the verb, intensifiers, negatives and subordinate clauses which were pleasing to see included.</p>	<p>Confusion of adjectives caused problems for some students, eg <i>fatigué/fatigant</i>, <i>excité/excitant</i>, <i>stressé/stressant</i>, <i>mal/mauvais</i>, <i>amusé/amusant</i>.</p>
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Higher tier insights

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Mean mark per paper: Higher



Mean mark per paper, Higher tier

AQA GCSE French

Paper 1

Areas where students did best	Areas where students could improve
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Questions 1-3 proved to be a positive start to the paper with 90% of students answering Questions 1 and 2 correctly.• Questions 7-8 discriminated well with Question 8.1 attracting the highest number of correct answers due to the accessibility of the vocabulary being tested.• Students coped extremely well with Question 18, particularly as the utterances were in a different order to the question.• Question 29.1 was the first question in Section B. This was done very well with over 80% of students scoring the mark, showing their ability to distinguish between different tenses.• Question 31.1 was done very well despite being a high demand item.• Questions 32-35 were overlap questions and produced a much better outcome than at Foundation tier with Question 33 being one of the best answered questions in the paper.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slightly more students answered Section B in English this year – students are advised to signpost this section during the five minutes' reading time.• Some answers lacked precision and did not fully convey the ideas heard, for example Questions 7.1, 7.2 and 8.1. Students should be reminded to listen to the whole of the utterance before answering the question.• Question 15 proved challenging despite being an overlap question. Option P was incorrectly chosen by the majority of students, suggesting that <i>embêtant</i> was not known.• Question 16 targeted the highest grades and was the least well answered question on the paper with <i>épices</i> and <i>goût</i> not well known.• Question 30.2 proved to be challenging because of the lexical item <i>permis de conduire</i> which was not well known.• In Question 31.2, students confused the words <i>pays</i> and <i>payé</i>.

Paper 2

Areas where students did best	Areas where students could improve
<p>Role Play</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role Play 11 Tasks a and b: these were generally well handled. • Role Play 10 Task d: students were happy to give their views on school homework and had clearly practised this in class; it was well done. • Role Play 17 Task a: students had clearly discussed this idea in class and opinions were successfully given. <p>Photo card</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some teacher-examiners very successfully paraphrased questions in such a way as to maintain the meaning of the original and to avoid giving additional assistance to the student. • A small number of teachers had successfully trained their students to use appropriately the construction <i>être en train de</i> which proved very effective. <p>General Conversation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is beneficial to all students if questions are tailored to their ability. A standard set of questions is unlikely to elicit the best performance from students from across the ability range. • Closed questions are best used to re-focus a student who is struggling, before reverting to open questions where students can convey information and, where possible, develop their ideas. To give students the chance to show an ability to respond spontaneously, teacher-examiners need to interject with follow-up questions and some tests showed good evidence of this, without the questions being off-putting for the 	<p>Role Play</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where students had to ask a question, they sometimes asked one unrelated to the prompt or simply read the prompt aloud. • Role Play 14 Task b: The impact of <i>alimentaire</i> was often overlooked as students made reference to fitness regimes. • Role Play 14 Task e: the word <i>conseil</i> was not well known. <p>Photo card</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some students made reference to items or to, eg, colours that could not be substantiated from the photo. • Students commonly tried to express their ideas in a continuous present tense reflecting English usage, eg <i>Ils sont mangeant</i> or <i>Ils sont manger</i>. <p>General Conversation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where students were allowed to deliver long monologues, spontaneity could not be credited. • Pronunciation was frequently undermined where students attempted to present language with which they were unfamiliar. • In some cases teacher-examiners tried to cover every topic in the theme and this led to a disjointed exchange that lacked any flow, rather than to a conversation. • In some cases the student's question was asked after the maximum time had elapsed and could not be credited.

student.

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- The quality of pronunciation varied greatly.

Reports on the exam are written by senior examiners who see more responses than anyone else. Access full reports via [aqa.org.uk/log-in](https://www.aqa.org.uk/log-in)

Paper 3

Areas where students did best	Areas where students could improve
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The majority of students found the paper accessible and the rubrics were followed in an exemplary fashion.• Question 1 proved to be a very positive start to the paper with approximately 90% of students scoring on each item.• Question 4 was well answered and approximately 81% of students scored at least two marks, which was pleasing.• All parts of Question 5 were well answered apart from 5.4, where the key point in Bruno’s comment was not identified.• Question 8 was very well answered by almost all students, especially 8.2.• Question 12 required students to select four true statements and this was done very well, with many high scoring answers. Around 94% of students scored two or more marks out of the four available.• The translation in Section C discriminated well with the whole mark range applied. Very few students failed to score at all and around 70% of students scored at least four marks out of nine.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Care should be taken when writing single letters so that the final answer is clear. If a student changes his/her answer, the original letter should be crossed out and the final answer written adjacent to the box.• Students experienced difficulties in Question 2 with confusion between <i>chevaux</i> and <i>cheveux</i>.• Question 7.1 on life at school caused some difficulties, although approximately 64% of students scored at least one mark out of four. Vague answers and an inability to convey the key idea were the main problem here.• Question 11 was a gap fill task and it proved challenging for many students with less than half scoring more than two marks out of four. The question targeted past participles and students needed to use grammatical knowledge to eliminate some of the options. <i>Accueilli</i> and <i>attristé</i> proved impossible for most students, though communication strategies should have helped students to work out the meaning.• In the translation in Section C, students need to be reminded of the need for precision in this task. Tenses need to be conveyed and pronouns need to be rendered accurately to score the marks. Sections 8 and 9 proved to be the most challenging with <i>il me faudra</i> and <i>travailler à l'étranger</i> causing difficulties.

Paper 4

Areas where students did best	Areas where students could improve
<p>This year's paper provided an opportunity for all students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.</p> <p>Question 1</p> <p>As at Foundation tier, Question 1.1 was the more popular choice as it is a topic with which students are very familiar. The bullet points were well understood and students were able to respond well.</p> <p>Question 1.2, although a less popular choice, was a familiar topic and bullets were rarely omitted leading to some very impressive responses.</p> <p>Question 2</p> <p>Question 2.1 was the less popular choice on the topic of technology but it did produce some excellent responses covering a wide range of relevant and varied content in response to the bullet points.</p> <p>Question 2.2 was the most popular choice on the topic of holidays. Students were able to provide detailed and extended responses conveying a lot of information in response to the bullet points.</p> <p>There were some impressive attempts at complexity of language with the use of connectives, infinitive constructions, <i>si</i> clauses, adverbs, different adjectives and a variety of tenses which was pleasing to see.</p> <p>The majority of students were able to produce language worthy of a mark of three and above out of five for Accuracy.</p>	<p>A lack of knowledge of key vocabulary and an inability to identify targeted rubrics and bullet points proved a barrier for some students.</p> <p>Question 1</p> <p>As at Foundation tier, in Question 1.1, some students did not recognise the time marker <i>hier</i> and therefore did not refer to past activities which impacted on their marks.</p> <p>It was also important for students to ensure that their responses in relation to bullets 3 and 4 made reference to school.</p> <p>In Question 1.2, bullet 4 required references to music festivals and some students made more general comments about music, which on their own did not meet the requirements of the task.</p> <p>Confusion of adjectives caused problems for some students, eg <i>fatigué/fatigant</i>, <i>excité/excitant</i>, <i>stressé/stressant</i>, <i>mal/mauvais</i>, <i>amusé/amusant</i>.</p> <p>Question 2</p> <p>In Question 2.1, some students did not clearly communicate a disadvantage of technology or where they did not address the time frame reference in bullet point 2 (<i>récemment</i>).</p> <p>In Question 2.2, some students did not address the 'disadvantages of your destination' and provided instead information about general holiday problems such as illness, lost passports etc. Students need to read the bullet points carefully to ensure they address them accurately.</p>

Question 3

The translation differentiated well with all students able to score some marks. Where there were minor errors, these did not prevent the award of marks.

It was pleasing to see that virtually all students attempted the translation.

Less successful responses were mainly due to inaccurate attempts at complex structures when students try to use language which is not commensurate with their ability. Common errors included inaccurate tense formation, in particular the perfect tense.

Question 3

Some key items of vocabulary were not well known, for example, 'young', 'June' and 'tickets'. Some students were not able to produce the imperfect tense or use the *nous* or *on* form of the verb. The future tense of *voir* also caused problems for some students.

The importance of practising high frequency words and phrases is stressed as well as ensuring that all parts of the translation have been addressed accurately, particularly the little words.

Next steps

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Contact us

T: 01423 534381

E: mfl@aqa.org.uk

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Responsible for multiple languages?

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